

Clemson University Department of Pesticide Regulation

Wood Infestation Reports and Termite Treatments on Properties with Divided Ownership



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Bulletin 21

A Guide for Applicators

This Bulletin will address the Department of Pesticide Regulations' policy regarding termite treatments and Wood Infestation Reports (CL-100s) in situations where property ownership is divided or parts of the property are jointly owned. Condominiums are the most common example. Just as termite control must address all areas of the structure either by treatment or by a waiver, the wood infestation report must address the entire structure or specifically exclude those areas not inspected.

Since even our native Eastern subterranean termites can forage up over 100 feet from the central part of the colony, proper treatment of the entire structure is crucial in controlling the infestation. The common ownership of foundations, walls, and expansion joints between units, however, may make a complete treatment impossible. As always, a waiver must be obtained from the property owner any time a standard will not be completed throughout a structure, regardless of the ownership of the untreated areas. (For information about how to fill out a waiver, see Bulletin 20, "How to Fill Out a Waiver").

Similarly, an applicator who applies pesticides to a commonly-owned area without permission from each owner may find himself in a legally indefensible position. It should be noted that legislation addressing these concerns (*i.e.*, "right to know" and posting regulations already exist in some states. It may be best, therefore, to place the burden of contracting for a treatment on the building management (the board of directors or "regime") so that the entire structure can be treated, instead of contracting with the individual owners.

A similar situation exists with regard to wood infestation reports. Since wood-destroying organisms will not restrict themselves to the individual condominium being purchased, the inspector is under an inferred obligation to inspect and report on the condition of the entire structure, including the foundation and the common areas; therefore, these areas must be either inspected or specifically excluded. An inspector who does not properly describe the limits of the area covered by his report may find himself responsible for the condition of the common areas outside of the condominium. This may be particularly significant where large, old homes have been converted into condominiums. A second-floor condominium on a three-unit building, for example, will probably carry a 1/3 interest in the foundation.

Just as with termite treatments, it may be most effective to work with the property manager in order to obtain permission to inspect the common areas. If this is not possible, the "remarks" section on the back of the report must describe specifically what areas were or were not inspected, as well as any other significant details regarding the specific findings, noted on the front of the report. The PCO is legally required to describe accurately all visible and accessible wood destroying organism activity and damage; it *is not* the PCO's responsibility to write a report that the purchaser or the mortgage lender will find acceptable.

Treatment Standards

(1) All cellulose debris (wood such as stumps or construction debris, paper, etc.) must be removed from crawlspaces. Applicators must also remove any other debris or rubble that may interfere with a proper treatment.

(2) Any wooden form boards that are in contact with the soil or less than eight (8) inches from it must be removed. Any other contact between wood or other building materials that are susceptible to termites (such as synthetic stucco systems) must be broken by cutting the material off and/or placing it on an impervious base. Treated wood of the proper rating (*i.e.*, ground-contact) may be left in place.

(3) All visible and accessible termite shelter tubes on both the masonry foundation and the wooden substructure must be scraped off (not merely broken). Subterranean termite shelter tubes are essentially "termite tracks;" therefore, shelter tubes must also be removed after any re-treatment of the structure.

The above Standards must be completed or waived on every subterranean termite treatment, both pre- and post-construction, regardless of the method of treatment (liquid, bait, barrier, or a combination). The ventilation Standard, listed below, must be completed or waived on every post-construction treatment.

(4) For conventional liquid treatments, the applicator should cut a narrow trench in the soil around any part of the building that touches the ground: the interior and exterior foundation walls, piers, pillars, and other supports, and pipes. This type of treatment establishes a barrier between the foundation and the soil. If the foundation footings are not covered by soil, the trench should be cut adjacent to, but not below, the footing. If the soil next to the foundation is covered by a concrete slab, the slab must be drilled at intervals of no more than 12 inches and treated at the same rate as the trenches unless the slab is more than 18 inches vertically from the nearest wooden foundation element.

(5) The treatment of hollow voids is also a required part of most conventional barrier treatments, although a few products are beginning to appear in the marketplace that do not require the treatment of voids under all circumstances. Voids must be treated unless they are covered by a solid (*i.e.*, poured concrete) masonry cap; usually only older earth-filled porches are built this way. Voids are normally found in precast-block walls and piers, the bases of chimneys, and between multiple courses of brick. Voids must be treated at intervals of no more than 16 inches. (Voids filled with concrete are no longer required to be treated, provided that test-drilling is conducted to verify that fact.)

(6) Ventilation reduces the overall moisture load in the crawlspace, and so the Standards also require that adequate ventilation be provided. There must be at least one eight (8) by 16 inch foundation ventilator for every 150 square feet of crawl space, with no "dead ends" or corners left unventilated.

(7) There must be enough clearance in the crawlspace to allow a good inspection to be made and for the application of control measures. Eight inches of clearance is the absolute minimum, and applicators must excavate the crawl space to provide at least this much clearance between the soil and the wooden substructure.

(8) The same general principles apply to slab construction, although they are applied using different techniques. For structures built on a concrete slab the soil beneath all points of potential termite entry must be treated, usually by drilling holes and pumping termiticide under pressure into the soil beneath interior and perimeter expansion joints, plumbing pipes, and voids. Expansion joints must be treated at intervals of no more than 12 inches, and voids must be treated at intervals of no more than 16 inches, just as in the Standards above. Drill holes in slabs must be no more than 12 inches away from the construction feature being targeted.

(9) Open bath traps (bath traps where soil is visible) must be accessed and treated so that subterranean termites will not enter the structure from these areas.

(10) Finally, the Regulations require that inspections be conducted in accordance with the terms of the warranty or the product label, whichever results in more frequent inspection of the structure.

For a more detailed description of treatment standards, please see Bulletin 15, "South Carolina Standards for the Control of Termites and Other Wood Destroying Organisms" and Bulletin 19, "Ants, Beetles, Bees, and Fungi: Other Wood-Destroying Organisms." These Bulletins are available on our website at <http://dpr.clemson.edu/Acrobat/index.html>. Also, keep your study manuals and your copy of the Rules and Regulations of the SC Pesticide Control Act handy .